



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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## Cold weather survival for Soldiers

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Winter has changed the course of many battles in history. Both Napoleon in 1812 and the Germans in the 1940s found Russia had a powerful ally: a giant, icy “sledgehammer” that stopped armies in their tracks.

Winter still poses a challenge to Soldiers, but they have a familiar tool — risk management — to help them avoid painful, sometimes crippling cold weather injuries.

Sgt. 1st Class Jared Holt is a senior instructor for the 10th Mountain Division Light Fighters School, Fort Drum, N.Y., and noncommissioned officer in charge of the Mountain Winter Warfare Course, the division’s mountaineering and cold weather training class.

“Three key components of successful cold weather operations are leadership, equipment maintenance and physical fitness,” he said. “Leaders should continuously check their Soldiers and themselves for signs and symptoms of cold weather injuries. Personal cold weather equipment, including tents, shelters and heaters or stoves, must be kept clean and serviceable to function correctly.

“Physical fitness is significantly important during cold weather operations. The fitter a Soldier is, the better he or she can cope with the cold, and the less likely they are to suffer from a cold weather injury.”

The U.S. Army Public Health Command offers Soldiers and leaders a comprehensive outline of cold injury prevention strategies at its website, <http://phc.amedd.army.mil>.

According to USAPHC, the most important factors for leaders to consider are proper wear of cold weather clothing and ensuring their Soldiers’ hydration and nutritional requirements are met. Both leaders and Soldiers should remember the COLD acronym for judging their clothing against the elements: Clean, (avoid) Overheating, Loose and in layers, and Dry.

With tens of thousands of troops still in Afghanistan, cold weather prevention is especially important. Temperatures can fall as low as minus 15 C in higher altitudes in country, with average temperatures farther inland hovering between minus 2 and minus 7 C between November and February, according to data from The Weather Channel.

More information on winter safety can be found at <https://safety.army.mil>.